

Colombian purple passionfruit shipments to foreign markets skyrocketed last year by more than 50%, as the industry is eyeing further growth in international markets.



The South American country recently hosted the first edition of the World Passionfruit Congress, with the national passionfruit growers' association (Fedepasifloras) having just been established in 2015.

The industry body's president Santiago Ríos Villalba told *Fresh Fruit Portal* almost all passionfruit exports went to Europe - mainly the Netherlands - where the purple passionfruit leads the pack by far.

"The purple passionfruit is the most exported variety, representing around 90% of total passionfruit exports from Colombia," he said.

"This is because it has a firmer skin than the maracuya variety, it has more flesh and its taste is similar, with a perfect balance between acidity and sweetness."

Colombia last year produced 150,000 metric tons (MT) of all passionfruit varieties - including granadilla - but only 6,000MT are currently exported.

"Brazil is the main producer of passionfruit in the world but they hardly export anything, everything stays in the internal market. The same thing happens in Colombia, where almost 144,000MT stays in the local market. But together with the government we are trying to help these fruits reach their great potential."

Data from trade promotion agency ProColombia that was presented at the recent World Passionfruit Congress showed purple passionfruit exports soared 53% year-on-year in 2016.

Exports reached US\$25.1 million last year, representing 18.7% of total horticultural exports, compared to avocados with US\$35 million and golden berries with US\$23.6 million.

There are currently 15,200 planted hectares of passionfruit varieties in Colombia, which generate more than 20,000 jobs, according to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Agronomic engineers from Fedepasifloras have been providing technical assistance to growers in the country over the last couple of years in order to boost exports, and so far the results are said to be very promising.

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